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Molder of Civil Defense

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Steuart Lansing Pittman

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 29—Sixteen years ago Steuart Lansing Pittman, a young Marine lieutenant, commanded a Chinese guerrilla junk in a bizarre postscript to the era of wooden ships and iron men.

Off the China coast, sailing for Shanghai, Lieutenant Pittman and his two-junk squad-armed Japanese

Man junk whose commander apparently refused to
in the believe that
News World War II ended

the previous week.

The Japanese opened fire with a deck-mounted field gun; the Americans and Chinese replied with small arms. After a bloody twenty-minute battle, Lieutenant Pittman triumphantly boarded the vanquished foe. The war, for him, was finally over.

Lean, intense and soft-spoken, Mr. Pittman, at 42, has less dangerous but still formidable work to do. Newly established in a small office on the Pentagon "E" or "Big Brass" ring, he is the nation's first Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civil Defense.

He directs a new \$207,600,000 project on problems of non-military defense, long regarded with apathy by Congress, the public and the Pentagon.

Raised on East Side

Mr. Pittman came to the Pentagon from a prosperous Washington law practice. "If I weren't convinced that the President and [Defense] Secretary McNamara were behind the program, I'd never have taken the job," he says.

He is a member of an old Maryland family, although he was born June 6, 1919, during a family stay in Albany, N. Y. His father was a chemical executive.

The boy was raised on Manhattan's East Side, and went to St. Paul's School and Yale (Class of '41).

He spent his summers hitchhiking, hopping freight cars and taking odd jobs out West. "That was as important as any other part of my education," he recalls.

Mr. Pittman became involved in World War II before his country did. After Yale he wound up as manager in British India for the Chinese National Aviation Company, a mysterious subsidiary of Pan American Airways, which was quietly ferrying supplies to war-torn China.

The customer was the American volunteer group, the Flying Tigers, then engaged in shooting down Japanese bombers for Chiang Kai-shek.

Since Britain and the United



U. S. Army via Associated Press

Leaves the limelight to others.

States were not then at war with Japan, Mr. Pittman's work was delicate. "I learned then that somehow you can always get something done if you try," he recalls.

Trekking Home to Enlist

He hitchhiked half around the world after the attack on Pearl Harbor to enlist at home in the Marine Corps. He spent the last eighteen months of the war leading guerrilla units on the East China coast. After the post-war naval battle he was awarded the Silver Star.

Adventures behind him, Mr. Pittman was graduated from Yale Law School in 1948. Two years later he was in Washington in the first of several foreign aid posts he was to hold.

A Democrat, but not a Kennedy campaigner, Mr. Pittman was picked for the Pentagon by Deputy Defense Secretary Roswell L. Gilpatric. "He was bright and able," a McNamara aide recalls. "He could do the job."

Mr. Pittman works methodically from 7:30 A. M. to 8 P. M. He has assembled what he calls a "bright but anonymous" staff. As a speaker he is calm and almost shy. He leaves the limelight to others.

On Sundays he and his wife, the former Barbara Milburn White, and their six children head for the family farm in near-by Maryland. A devoted agriculturist, Mr. Pittman concentrates on how not to smoke.

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